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MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

DURING the course of this month the scene of politics has been totally changed. Spain, which had so long attracted the observation of Europe, is now forgotten, or only considered as the scene of a complicated mixture of glory and disgrace; glory

to the hands that acted, disgrace on the heads that conceived the project of its liberation from a foreign yoke, to replace it under the torporific influence of its former despotism. A power already humbled and supposed to be prostrate at the feet of Bona-

parte, is said to be preparing to lay claim to its former high rank among nations; while scenes in which we are more immediately interested call our attention forcibly nearer home. As to the first mentioned of these countries, the vital spark of effectual resistance seems to have been extinguished by the embarkation of the British Army, and the unequal contest still partially maintained against the conqueror, is more the result of blind despair than consistent well concerted resistance. Did any hope remain, that Spain by its internal resources could extirpate the extrinsic evil which has penetrated into its vitals, the fate of Saragosa must dissipate that shadow of consolation. This city, after an obstinate contest against the concentrated forces of the French, after maintaining itself against the united efforts of famine, fire, and the sword, with a courage deserving of a better support, has at length been compelled to capitulate. Twenty thousand of its defenders are said to have perished, and nearly the same number to have surrendered, with a choice of engaging in the service of their new sovereign, or being carried as prisoners of war into France; Palafox is said to have died either of wounds, or of fatigue, and Bonaparte is thus freed from the most pertinacious of his adversaries. Romana, and the Duke del Infantado, it is reported, are not only able to hold out, but have commenced offensive operations, at the head of numerous bodies of Spaniards. But English credulity has been so often gulled with these bombastic statements of mock-musters, and paper levies, that little stress can be laid on such reports. In Cadiz the spirit of resistance still exists. Situate at the remotest extremity of Spain, under the more immediate protection of the English, whose marine affords the opportunity of throwing in supplies, and holds out the prospect of ultimate safety to the garrison in case of extremities; it is not surprising that it should be the focus in which all the dispersed rays of opposition should concentrate.

But the strongest proof of the complete subjugation of this country, is the departure of Bonaparte and the greater part of his troops. He is not apt to leave his work half done.—The desultory warfare still maintained by unconnected parties of the Spaniards, seem to be considered by him as the agitation of the seas after a storm, which requires only time to subside. When in the plenitude of his power he poured his hosts over the Pyrenees, and swept away every trace of opposition as he advanced, he did not trust solely to that mighty military machine whose operations he directed. He appears to have put in action springs more secret, but not less effectual. He divided the people from the nobility; and by an extraordinary political maincuvre, the most absolute monarch of the continent, who invaded the country with the avowed intention of forcing a sovereign on the people in opposition to the rights of the hereditary ruler and their own choice, appeared as the assertor of the civil and religious liberties of the people, while their ally, though in possession of these blessings, was the supporter of the old system of monarchial and monastic tyranny. Neither do the Spanish Nobility appear to have been proof against the temptation to which the insidious policy of their enemy exposed them. Perhaps during their short lived government they discerned that their darling privileges were about to be encroached on by those they had hitherto held in subjection; that the people conscious of their power, would claim their rights, and they therefore preferred to be petty despots at home beneath a foreign master, than be the independent rulers of a free people.

Whatever may be the general opinion respecting the Spanish peninsula, it is certain that the English ministry do not despair. Undismayed by former misfortunes, a formidable armament is again fitting out for the assistance of our new allies. It is to be hoped that their plan of operations will be better digested, and that the flower of these nations will not again be sent out on what is vulgarly called "a man of war's cruise," an expedition without design or destination. It is indeed but a bad omen of future success, that the whole of the former expedition lies still involved in

mystery; the ministry carefully avoid giving a full and explicit account of the whole affair; not even the returns of the losses suffered have as yet been published; and we are left to judge of the magnitude of these from the whispers of individuals, and the magnified reports of common fame. Yet even from these something may be collected, sufficient to indicate the probable result of the projected equipment, if directed by the same men, and on the same principles, or rather the same want of principles, which terminated in the failure of the former. For the employment of the British force under Sir J. Moore, three plans were proposed, one by Sir H. Dalrymple, another by Sir J. Moore, and another by the Supreme Junta. According to the first, the troops were to act in Biscay, forming as it were the left wing of a great army opposed to the French at the foot of the Pyrenees, and supported in the van by garrisons, strong forts, and new native levies. By the second, the South of Spain was to be the scene of action, and Seville, Grenada, and Cadiz, the principal *points d'appui* for our troops. In the third, it was proposed to send a British force to Catalonia. The British ministry adopted none of these: but by sending our force into the heart of Leon, while the Spanish forces acted in two unconnected bodies in different parts under Blake and Castanos, allowed the enemy to pursue his usual tactic of defeating each body in detail. *Divide et Impera* is the Machiavelian maxim for conquest. We have adopted it; but not altogether; we choose the former part and leave the latter to our enemy: we divide and they conquer.

GERMANY is again about to assume the appearance it had in all the former wars of Europe, that of being the great centre of action. A fresh rupture between Austria and France is the signal for another great continental convulsion. The secret causes of this change in the sentiments of the former of these powers, are still unknown, nor has it yet been declared whether she takes the field as aggressor, or to prevent the encroachment of the latter. A short retrospection of past events may serve to throw some light on this subject. At the time of the Spanish insurrection, Austria had manifested a hostile disposition, or at least prepared to encrease and strengthen her means of defence. These proceedings excited the suspicions of the French ruler, and he immediately took steps to counteract any bad effects which might result from her hostility at a time that his power seemed to totter by the convulsions in the west. He wished to confirm his connections with the Emperor of Russia. The meeting at Erfurth took place; the result of which was such as to remove any apprehensions which he might have been under from Austria. He was now empowered to direct all his efforts against his new enemy. The consequence was, the immediate dissipation of the Spanish armies, the expulsion of the English, and the subjugation of the western peninsula. Having accomplished this object as far as he thought consistent with the employment of his forces, he would naturally wish to free himself from any apprehensions of hostility from Austria, and to deprive that power of the means of retarding his designs in any other part to which he may be hereafter obliged to turn his arms. Hence it appears that Austria is forced into this war for her own preservation. It is almost impossible that she would have willingly lain dormant during the late great struggle, when in possession of means to create such a powerful diversion in favour of the enemies of Bonaparte, and should now voluntarily engage in a single-handed contest, against a power whom its late triumphs have swelled up to a gigantic magnitude. Great as is the versatile imbecility of continental councils, powerful as is the influence of British gold, such a proceeding would argue a degree of obstinate stolidity inexplicable even on those motives. The die however is cast; war is already declared, and it now only remains to consider what resources the devoted power has to skreen itself from this dreadful scourge, this besom of detruction which has swept so many empires from the face of the earth. We have heard but of one. The Archduke—in his name, seem to centre all the means of defence. Of men, indeed there are always sufficient for slaughter in Germany; but from what store are the sinew-

of war to be furnished? an exhausted treasury, and unfurnished arsenals; a dejected population; and not a single ally: for on Great Britain she can surely reckon little after the occurrences in Spain. The prospect affords but little hope to the friends of the old order of things, nor can much better be hoped for from the new. Much must depend on the part taken by Russia. She is such a gainer by the alliance with France, that a change in her political relations is scarcely to be expected. Our unfortunate Ally the king of Sweden, after being deprived of all the eastern part of his dominions, is forced to throw himself into the arms of his inveterate enemy: it is even reported that a serious insurrection of the people has occurred in that country. Irritated by the war into which they have been forced for causes in which the country had so little share, and could derive nothing but calamity and disgrace, they wish to force their king to other measures, and even to reclaim those rights of which they had been deprived by his predecessor. Other accounts describe this rising as of a local nature, and say that it has already been suppressed.

FRANCE, however, does not confine herself to continental operations Her movements towards the east have excited a considerable degree of alarm and agitation in India. It has been said that after the peace of Tilsit a large body of the French army had directed its course through the southern provinces of Asiatic Russia, with a view of invading our territories in that quarter. Of this nothing farther has been heard. But it is certain that every means are used to establish a friendly intercourse between France and Persia, evidently with the intention of facilitating the views now apprehended; and a considerable degree of alarm and agitation has exhibited itself in the northern provinces of India. While England retains the command of the sea, the permanent conquest of that extensive country can never be accomplished by an insulated force, whose strength incessantly crumbling away by the nature of the climate, can be recruited but slowly and uncertainly, by the circuitous course necessary to be taken by land. But enough may be done to throw the company's affairs into great confusion, and to accumulate on them an increase of expenditure, which in addition to the deprivation of the customary taxes from those provinces that will be the seat of war, will be suddenly felt in the present exhausted state of their revenue.

The favourable turn which the politics of TURKEY have taken may be some check on the ambitious views of the French on this side. A treaty of alliance has been effected with the new government through the agency of Mr. Adair, whose diplomatic talents seem to have been universally admired, in effecting it. We know not what dependance can be placed on the fluctuating councils of this distracted empire, governed as it is by an ignorant and lawless soldiery; nor is it probable that the assistance of the English will be of much avail, if the Emperor of Russia, freed from a war in the north, seriously turns his thoughts to its dismemberment. In such a case the new formed alliance will only contribute to precipitate its fall by offering an excuse to the combined masters of the Continent to invade a nation which has deserted them and formed an alliance with their most formidable enemy.

The remains of the French fleet also, which has so long continued in port, has at length ventured to shew itself. A squadron of eleven ships of the line with some frigates eluding the vigilance of the British admiral, lately quitted Brest, with the supposed intention of raising the blockade of L'Orient. Their destination however was soon discovered, and they did not effect their escape into a place of security without loss. Three of their frigates and one line of battle ship were run ashore and destroyed, with little loss on our side. It has been since discovered that another squadron of six sail of the line have about the same time sailed from L'Orient, in a southerly direction. Hopes were for some time entertained that they had been intercepted by Admiral Duckworth: these however have been disappointed. Their object must be of great importance, as they passed a British convoy without even attempting any captures. It is supposed their destination is for the Spanish settlements

of South America, and that they carry thither the *ci-devant* royal family of Spain.

Here are grounds for fresh political speculations. If such be the object, and that it must be of the first consequence, the circumstances of the expedition leave little room to doubt, we cannot but think that another enemy is about to be raised against us, under the appearance of our present ally. It was the original plan of Bonaparte to force the Spanish court into a voluntary exile into their trans-Atlantic dominions. Such a step would not only produce an apparent abdication of that monarch, but would afford an excuse for placing the crown on a new head, and establishing another branch of his family in one of the most powerful dependencies of his new-formed dynasty. The separation of the colonies from the mother country, which would be the inevitable result of such procedure, by weakening each, would facilitate his designs against both. When once master of old Spain, he was sensible that he had the support of two powerful parties in the new seat of government; the one what is commonly called the French party, the other those, whose interests would lead them to wish for a re-union of the disorganised parts under a new head, rather than a perpetual banishment from the land of their nativity, under their ancient sovereign.

The proceedings in Madrid previous to the insurrection, prevented this from being attended with the same success as attended a similar attempt in Portugal, and led to the subsequent scene of slaughter and misery in which we have borne too large a part. The present transportation of the king, environed, as he must be, by a band of satellites, the private agents and emissaries of France, cannot fail to give support to the French party already existing under Liniers, and to confirm the animosities against the English, which arising from a long continued course of religious and national hatred has been aggravated to the highest degree, by the late attempt upon Buenos Ayres. This, it must be confessed, is but conjecture, resting however on well-founded probabilities, on the well known character of Bonaparte, and on that of the nation now our ally, which name will be retained so long, and no longer, than is suitable to their own self-interest.

The only foreign occurrence relative to England, is the taking of the French West India Island of Martinique. Late accounts state that the island has surrendered, with the exception of a single fort, where the French have collected all their forces, and seem determined to make a final stand. Of its speedy reduction little doubt is entertained.

With respect to internal occurrences, the great cause which engaged, during the last month, the undivided attention of the nation is at length decided; decided in a manner such as every friend to his country could have wished. It is the calm and dignified triumph of reason and justice over power, abuse and corruption. It is singular to trace out the unexpected means by which this transaction has been completely unravelled. To say nothing of the cause from which it originated, the disgraceful connection of a prince of the blood with a professed wanton, and the still more disgraceful refusal to pay the hire of her guilty services, though even here we may find something to affect a material part of the evidence *voluntarily* presented to the parliament, for perhaps it is not universally known in this country, that in the marriage contract as performed according to the rites of the church of England, the man promises to the woman, not indeed *on the honour of a prince* but on the *oath of a christian*, "to love her, comfort her, honour and keep her in sickness and in health, and *forsaking all other*, keep only unto her, so long as they both shall live," setting this aside, let us take a summary survey of the inquiry.

A private country gentleman unknown to, and unsupported by any party, advances to charge the king's son, the commander in chief of all the British army, with corruption in the exercise of his official duties, and openly states the several cases which have come to his knowledge. An universal emotion is excited; the servants of the crown, and the friends of the Duke, eagerly call for investigation; already they exult in anticipated triumph, and enjoy the prospect of

ruin and disgrace about to fall on the accuser's head. The independent members are cautious and doubtful. They are conscious that inquiry is necessary, yet fearful of success against such odds. Mr. Wardle stands almost alone, browbeaten, threatened and derided. He is told that his adversary stands high in the opinion of the people and the Army; it is hinted that he is the dupe of a conspiracy formed against the *character* of the house of Brunswick; it is almost insinuated that he is one of the party. He is openly told, that infamy must attach somewhere—The tongue that spoke these words did not understand the awful portent it uttered. The inquiry is invited, forced on. One of the few who really wish for investigation proposes that the witnesses should be examined on oath. This is a demand too reasonable to be refused—Yet compliance might be dangerous—A noble lord, too well known to this country, thinks the emergency worthy of his interference. Like Belial, "prepared to perplex maturest counsels" he rises.—

> I should be much for *solemn oaths*, O Peers,
> As not behind in hate, *but that I find*—

This BUT decides the question, and the witnesses are to answer on their *honour*. Yet this mode of inquiry forced on the house by the friends and advocates of the accused party, for the ministerial party, though judges, made no secret of their bias, has led to discoveries which otherwise might have still remained unveiled, had the rigid and awful bond of an oath checked that freedom of answer and desultory mode of examination which then would have been inadmissible. A woman is brought forward; she is harassed by every kind of mental torture that the ingenuity of thorough-paced legal inquisitors, and keen hunters after contradictory evidence can invent. What is the consequence? does she invalidate her own testimony? no; but in self defence, in vindication of her own veracity, she reluctantly produces papers, proved to be genuine, directly contradicting the evidence of men high in office, and the solemn word of honour of a prince. The witnesses for the accused force themselves on the house. Does their evidence acquit their friend? On the contrary one of them is convicted of prevarication. To conclude, after a debate protracted to a length almost unprecedented, the house divided on the question, "whether in consequence of a system of corruption and undue influence having been carrried on in the army, of which it is not said that the Duke of York had any knowledge, it was prudent to continue him in the command of the army." The numbers for the motion, were 199, against it, 294, leaving a majority in favour of the Duke, or of the Ministers, for it is indifferent, of 95. But it must be observed that the Minority were independent country gentlemen: of what the majority was composed, it is needless to mention. Other propositions were then made in order to decide on the quantum of royal guilt or innocence, when the Duke cut the knot which his friends could not untie, by resigning his situation: his resignation was accepted, and in this compromise all parties acquiesced. On considering these proceedings, the details of which would occupy a book larger than one of our volumes, every unprejudiced mind must reflect on the excellency of our Constitution which brings the most exalted offender before the bar of Justice; and on the hands to which that constitution is entrusted, which can so skillfully avert the arm of Justice when uplifted. Within these three years, we have seen three courts of honour held; their efficacy will not excite a very general wish for their *more general establishment*. In the first was tried military peculation, and the defendant was acquitted *upon the honour* of a NOBLEMAN: in the second, military disability, and the defendant was cleared *upon the honour* of an OFFICER, in the third, military corruption, and the defendant cleared himself *upon the honour* of a PRINCE. The letter of the infatuated Charles, to his too credulous friend and minister, Strafford, may teach posterity the credit due to the word of a King: it remains still to calculate, in comparing the weight of the two pledges, how much the superior solemnity in the present case, can over

balance the dignity of the character in the former.

The political relations of America with Britain have been hitherto unnoticed because they principally affect this country. The Embargo may impoverish England, but it must starve Ireland. Our hopes were highly raised a few days ago, from a communication said to be officially delivered by Mr. Foster to the Gentlemen of the Linen trade of Ireland, that the Embargo was removed, thus holding out a flattering prospect of a sufficiency of flax for the employment of our Northern population, for the next year. What then was our disappointment to find that this was but the first half of a fact, whose occurrence was long since expected, but whose operation could have little effect on our present difficulties, that the Embargo was removed to make room for the non-intercourse act, which equally with the former, prevents our communication with America, during the operation of the Orders in Council, but leaves the trade of their country open to neutrals. The cause of such a mutilated report we know not at present, and must suspend our curiosity, till next month's changes can explain it.

PUBLIC OCCURRENCES.

IRISH.

ULSTER.

PETITION FROM BANBRIDGE, &c.

THE following petition deserves a place in the pages of the Belfast Magazine, as it will shew that public spirit, though extinct among some classes of the community, still prevails among others, who venture to come forward to state their grievances to the legislature in manly terms. The direct object of the petition is happily obtained by the defeat of the plan of allowing distillation from grain in Ireland. But the other subject, the want of the flaxseed, to which they incidentally, though spiritedly alluded, still remains to threaten us with approaching calamity.

"To the Honorable the house of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of the principal inhabitants of the town of Banbridge and the neighbouring parishes of Seapatrick, Tullylish, Donoughcloney, Aghaderg, and Magharally, in the County of Down,

Sheweth,

That your petitioners have heard with unfeigned concern of the intention expressed by his Majesty's ministers to insert a clause in the corn distillery bill, now before your honorable house, to remove the existing prohibition of the distillation from grain in Ireland, inasmuch as they conceive, that the said intended clause, if enacted, must be highly injurious in its effects, to the interests of this part of the united Kingdom.

Your petitioners beg leave to state that the produce of the last grain crop in Ireland, has been by no means so abundant, as has been represented, that the prices of provisions are higher now, than they were when the prohibition took place, nay, higher than it is recollected, they have ever been, at this season of the year in Ireland, with the single exception of the distressful spring of 1801. That these prices have lately encreased from the supposed probability, that the prohibition may be discontinued, and moreover that the great article of food in Ireland, potatoes, are now selling in the markets far beyond the average rate of common years.

Considering, too, that all the articles of prime necessity, in our manufactures and trades, are dear and scarce, above all, *that the supply of flax for the ensuing year is such as to excite the strongest apprehension, that a total stagnation may take place in our staple manufacture, by which hundreds of thousands of our population are enabled to procure their daily food*, which they can with difficulty obtain for their families, at the present rates of the markets, your petitioners are induced most earnestly to implore that your honorable house may pause, and weighing the calamitous results likely to arise from its enactment, prevent the introduction of the clause, removing the prohibition of the distillation from grain in Ireland, into the